

The University of Chicago

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SYNOD OF NORTH AMERICA**

**A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL IN
CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR
OF PHILOSOPHY
1935**

**By
CARL EDWARD SCHNEIDER**

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The German Evangelical Synod of North America, now merged with the Reformed Church in the United States under the name of Evangelical-Reformed Church, was founded in the year 1840 as *Der Deutsche Evangelische Kirchenverein des Westens*. It might appear to the casual observer that the establishment of the *Kirchenverein*, like the founding of all immigrant churches, represented purely the transplantation of a foreign culture to the new world where, protected from old-world influences and indifferent to the forces of a strange environment, it would develop its independent forms. The development of this German religious community on the Missouri frontier, however, can not be understood apart from the conditions prevailing in both Europe and America at the time. From the time of its inception it was put to the task of emancipating itself from the ties which bound it to the fatherland and establishing such contacts with the new environment as would constitute it an American body.

The German immigration to the western frontier during the first half of the nineteenth century was occasioned by the peculiar converging of political, economic and religious factors. A fortuitous combination of circumstances lent color and romance to the picture. The economic depression in Germany coincided with years of plenty in America; the politically oppressed were inspired by the prospects of American democracy; the gloom of ecclesiastical tyranny was brightened by the promise of religious freedom in the new world. It was a unique situation.

A large number of the German emigrants of the early part of the nineteenth century belonged to the peasant class. The post-Napoleonic period groaned under oppressive taxation. A series of crop failures, interspersed with terrifically cold winters, wrought untold misery. The attractions of the new world, on

the other hand, were most alluring. The eyes of America were turned toward the West. Home markets in the East were on the decline. The specter of soil-depletion had aroused misgivings on the part of the younger generation concerning the continued prosperity of the East. Escape was found in the unlimited resources of the unclaimed fertile valleys of the West. The news of the American boom spread to Germany where more books were being written about America than about any other country in the world. Above all, the lower classes were wonder-struck by fabulous stories of the actual availability of land, of the phenomenal rise of new communities in the West and exceedingly low taxes. Thus the illiterate and uncultured German peasant was found in the front ranks of the immigration of this period.

Nineteenth century Germany was also the home of a highly educated and cultured class from whom the political liberal, destined to play an important part in the development of German life in the West, was largely recruited. General disaffection had been inflamed by the ecclesiastical paternalism of the government. The consistorial régime of the subsidized clergy, or *Pfaffen*, as they were contemptuously called, was roundly condemned. The liberal movement which followed the monarchical reaction after the Napoleonic wars was centered at the German universities in the so-called *Burschenschaften* movement. The machinations of Metternich, however, and the absolute-monarchical spirit of Prussia shattered the dream of the nationalists and the hopes of the young republicans. A series of intense persecutions turned many wistful eyes to America and many a German heart responded to Lenau's exultant song:

Oh thou new world, and Freedom's world
Against whose fertile, flowery strand
Thy tyrant's wrath in vain is hurled,
In thee I greet my Fatherland.¹

Although a general mass emigration did not occur until after the Revolution of 1830, a few notable individuals, such as Gottfried Duden,² Louis Eversmann and Karl Follen in 1824, and Francis Lieber in 1827, had previously directed attention

¹ Quoted by J. G. Legge, *Rhyme and Revolution*, London, 1918, p. 131.

² The unrivalled popularity of Missouri among the German immigrants of this period was due to Duden who, during the years 1824-27, located in Warren County, Missouri, and attractively described his experiences in his *Bericht über eine Reise nach den westlichen Staaten Nord Amerikas und über einen mehrjährigen Aufenthalt am Missouri* . . . Elberfeld, 1829.

to the new world. The immigrants of 1832, the so called "thirty-twoers," were warmly welcomed. A group of ten thousand arrived in that year. The total number for the decade was 152,000—not all of whom, however, were political refugees. From 1830 to 1845 the average annual emigration rose to about forty thousand.³ And why should not America, the land of the free, with its much vaunted *Sternenbanner*, the home of Washington, of Jefferson, and now of Jackson, become the haven for these oppressed?

Opposition to the church had been nurtured by the rationalists who rejected both the formalistic orthodoxy of the hard minded Lutherans and the obscurantism of the naïve Pietist. When the state sought to suppress this free spirit, political and theological liberals turned to the new world for relief. America alone offered escape from the ecclesiastical tyranny and the religious obscurantism of the conservative state-church. In this free country every one could openly believe or disbelieve anything he desired.

The counterpart of the rationalist was the Pietist. The seventeenth century Pietism of Philipp Spener, August Francke and Nicolaus Zinzendorf was strongly ascetic and emotional at times to the point of fanaticism. In opposition to the rising tide of rationalism in the nineteenth century the movement had experienced a rebirth throughout Germany. Under the leadership of Professors Johann Neander at Berlin, Friedrich Tholuck and Heinrich Guericke at Halle, and Johann Beck at Basel (later at Tübingen), a biblical and experiential theology had developed, dignified by scholarly polemic against the tirades of current rationalism. Due to the influence of Johann Bengel, the Spener of the eighteenth century, Württemberg became the real home of German Pietism. Under the aegis of Pietism, to stem the tide of rationalism, numerous interconfessional Christian, Bible, missionary and tract societies originated throughout Germany, the most noteworthy being the *Christentums Gesellschaft*, founded by Johann Urlsperger, a devoted follower of Bengel.

A direct product of this development was the founding, in 1815, of the *Evangelische Missions Gesellschaft zu Basel* which, with pietistic fervor, began opposing the narrow confessional

³ Löher evidently used census statistics in his estimate that the number of emigrants from 1831 to 1860 averaged 50,000 a year, reached the annual number of 100,000 after 1849 and amounted to 143,000 in 1853. The total from 1815 to 1860 amounted to 2,500,000. *Vide* Franz Löher, *Geschichte der Deutschen in Amerika*, Göttingen, 1855, p. 253.

distinctions of the day. The unionism of Basel was not of the ecclesiastical, bureaucratic, Prussian type but rather, as Inspector Christian Blumhardt expressed it, based on the apostolic method of missions which did not recognize the distinction between Lutherans and Reformed. Similar to the Basel institution and also a product of the pietistic Urlsperger movement was the *Rheinische Missions Gesellschaft* (1828), with its center at Barmen.

These various political, cultural and religious distinctions were furthermore complicated by intersecting denominational groupings. Protestant Germany was divided against itself by numerous rival creeds and competing liturgical orders. In some places Lutheran and Reformed congregations shared the use of the same church, each having its own form of worship, yet each violently antagonistic to the other. Gradually, however, the desire for a union of the opposing groups began to manifest itself. The sense of national solidarity had been quickened by the French wars from which the new Prussian state had emerged. Both Lutheran and Reformed branches were opposed to the rationalists. The spirit of the Enlightenment had depreciated the significance of dogmatic formulas. Pietism, always more vital in Reformed than in Lutheran communities, had begun to temper denominational distinctions. Indeed, for three decades the question of union had been variously discussed, having been espoused especially by such men as Schleiermacher.

The union project could be approached from the viewpoint of doctrine, polity, or liturgy. King Friedrich Wilhelm III (1797-1840) favored the latter approach and, after extended liturgical studies, proposed an order of worship (1816) to be used first in the garrison and court-church but designed ultimately for use in all the churches of the realm. The approaching tercentenary anniversary of the Reformation in October, 1817, was chosen as the proper occasion to promulgate the union and on September 27, the king, in a court proclamation, called upon the German Protestants of Prussia—Lutherans and Reformed—to unite in a communion service according to the new rite.

Thus the Evangelical church, the church of the Prussian Union, came into existence, marking an epoch in the history of German Protestantism.⁴ Doctrinal equations were to be avoid-

⁴ Erich Foerster, *Die Entstehung der Preussischen Landeskirche*, Tübingen, 1905.

ed. Lutherans were not to become Reformed nor were the Reformed to become Lutherans but, united in essentials on the basis of Eph. 4:4-6, they were now to become "Evangelical." The union was widely hailed by the populace and spread to other provinces where the decision to accept or reject was frequently referred to the local congregations. Greatest success attended the movement in the West, especially in the region along the Rhine in Westphalia, Baden, Nassau and in both Hesses.

Most of the churches, however, did not accept the new order. Vigorous opposition immediately emanated from Klaus Harms, the vehement pastor in Kiel who, in his *Ninety-five Theses* of 1817, tiraded equally against rationalism and unionism. Indeed, although the Evangelicals as well as the Reformed and Lutherans opposed the prevailing rationalistic propaganda, the most militant opponents of the union were the Old Lutherans who inaugurated an exclusive confessionalistic tradition which has continued to the present time. The strict Lutherans finally rallied to the support of the pious Lutheran preacher and professor, Johann Scheibel, of the University of Breslau, who became the leader of the anti-union party.

The Prussian government sought to suppress not only the separatistic Lutherans but, as early as 1825, published a decree against the "subjectivistic, mystic, Pietistic movement" and its "*dumfe trübe und ängstigende Lebensansicht*"—a position which was shared by some other German states. The orthodox of all branches united in the attack upon the rationalists and urged their dismissal from the church.

Thus the beginning of the nineteenth century in Germany witnessed a three-cornered controversy between the rationalists, Pietists and orthodox Lutherans which became more complicated when the orthodox joined the Pietists in their opposition to the rationalists, and became even more involved when, under the auspices of the state, the Lutheran and Reformed branches were united into the Evangelical church. The emigrants who came to America during these and later years—peasants, scholars, patriots, students, orthodox, liberals, Reformed, Lutheran, Evangelicals, Pietists and rationalists—brought with them memories of the animosities of the old world which all too often were perpetuated in the new.

Arriving in America, the German immigrants were caught in the midst of that great western migration designated by

Channing as "one of the marvelous phenomena of history." Unusually large numbers settled in Missouri. The economic resources of this state had begun to attract national attention.⁵ Missouri was rapidly being recognized as the key state for the occupation of the Great Valley and the attention of German immigrants inevitably turned in this direction.

How did religion fare in the German settlement of the West? A variety of types, ranging from sentimental Pietists to abandoned infidels, congregated on the frontier. It would not be correct to maintain that only the educated, university-trained Germans were anti-religious and that the indigent peasant groups were spiritually-minded. Although the least influential cultural factor was the pietist-peasant and the common laborer their ranks were frequently penetrated by rationalistic propagandists and impostors who stirred up antagonism to orthodox religion.

The responsibility, however, for fixing the odium of materialism and atheism upon German groups lay with the educated, rationalistic Germans⁶ who were generally dominated by radically anti-ecclesiastical sentiments. Obsessed by memories of German consistories and synods, they loudly rejected all forms of organized religion and with a single gesture banned all preachers as despicable *Pfaffen*, whose one aim was to fleece their innocent victims and impose on them the bondage of ecclesiasticism. Religion was held to be strictly a personal matter and ecclesiastical institutions and synods were therefore dangerous and undesirable. Similarly all pietistic forms of religion were ruthlessly opposed.

The liberal German also opposed the religion of the newly arrived Easterner from "over the mountains" who brought with him the abominations of Puritanism—temperance, prohibitionism, Sabbatarianism, etc. All this he denounced as Yankee or American hypocrisy designed to deprive him of his God-given liberty. The German in turn was roundly condemned for his *Sabbathschänderei* when on Sunday he visited the parks and

5 In the year 1818 this "territory was settling as fast as any other was settled" and in 1819 we are told that "the emigration to Missouri is so great as to furnish a home market . . ." *Niles' Register*, May 16, 1818; Jan. 1819.

6 The mouthpiece of political and religious liberalism, and the outstanding representative of enlightened German thought in the Middle West for decades to come was the *Anzeiger des Westens*, founded in 1835 by Herr von Festen and Christian Bimpge.

places of amusement, took an excursion into the country or spent his time in target-shooting or bowling.

The religious destitution of German communities manifested itself in various ways. At some places the school teacher was considered more important than the preacher and provided the necessary religious services. Frequently German settlements were the victims of roving independent preachers with a very liberal theology and still more liberal moral standards.⁷ Some of them were theologically trained. Many of them were not ordained. In some communities these free-lance preachers found easy entrance. In cultured Latin-farmer settlements it was possible for a brilliant, free-thinking preacher to pose as the *Herr Pastor*, to minister to a congregation in the name of Freedom, Equality, and Brotherhood and baptize the children of the community in the name of this trinity. Under the leadership of such rationalistic preachers, the so-called independent, free churches sprang into existence—the plague of devout pastors for decades to come.

At times groups of pious Germans without the guidance of a pastor would organize a church. Meetings would be conducted in the home of some farmer at which a sermon and prayer would be read by the leader of the group. If the organization flourished, steps would be taken to secure a pastor. In some instances a church was built before a pastor was secured.

German communities on the whole, however, were without churches or pastors and reports of itinerant preachers from the East and German travellers alike testified to their spiritual plight. There was an evident distrust of the American preacher who offered his services, and little appreciation for his unprofessional status.⁸

How, then, could the religious needs of German communities in the West be met? It was a foregone conclusion that the most effective succor must come from German sources either in America or Europe. From the time of Heinrich M. Mühlenthal, the father of American Lutheranism, the German Lutherans of the homeland had manifested live interest in the spiritual welfare of their American brethren. Likewise the German

⁷ The operations of such an impostor are described by Johann Büttner, *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Nord Amerika—Mein Aufenthalt und meine Reisen in denselben vom Jahre 1834-1841*, Hamburg, 1844, I, pp. 148-152.

⁸ W. G. Bek, "Followers of Duden," *Missouri Historical Review*, XV (1921), 534.

and Dutch Reformed churches on the continent had generously come to the support of the German Reformed colonial settlers. A similar interest was now manifested by the non-confessional and pietistic missionary societies of Basel and Barmen.

Although the original interest of Basel lay in foreign missions, there gradually developed the policy of assisting the German "colonists" in the new world. Early in 1835 the German-Swiss colony at Neu Aargau (Centerville), Illinois, approached the Basel committee for a "devout pastor to preach the simple gospel." Johann J. Riess was delegated to this difficult field.⁹ The sending of Riess to Illinois helped to formulate Basel's American policy. Although it seemed contrary to the primary purpose of the society to assume obligations for the American field, Basel was inclined to accept the American challenge since it would always have at its disposal missionaries who, because of ill health or language difficulties, were not fitted for foreign service.

Nor was the Basel committee mistaken in assuming that additional pleas for assistance would arrive. By the year 1840 pietistic, unionistic Basel had developed a warm interest in the American field—having by that time stationed Friedrich Schmid at Ann Arbor, Michigan; Martin Schaad at Detroit, Michigan; G. W. Metzger at Liverpool, Ohio; Johannes Gerber at Madison, Indiana; J. J. Riess at Centerville, Illinois (now Millstadt); George W. Wall at St. Louis, Missouri; and Joseph Rieger at Alton, Illinois. The latter four became charter members of the *Kirchenverein*.

The work of the Barmen Mission Institute among the Germans in America originated in the plan of Barmen to establish a mission among the American Indians, where Germans occupying adjacent territories could also be served. Barmen definitely distinguished between these two missionary projects. Pursuant to these plans, Philipp Heyer and Tilman Niess landed at New York in July, 1836. They arrived in St. Louis in November, at practically the same time that Wall and Rieger put in their appearance. Prevented from going farther by the ill health of Niess and the approaching winter, they proceeded to minister to the needs of the German colony at St. Charles, Missouri. Heyer deserted the Barmen Society and became pastor of an Evangel-

⁹ *Magazin für die neueste Geschichte der protestantischen Missions und Bibelgesellschaft*, Basel, XX (1835), 396; XXI (1836), 429. *Diary of J. J. Riess*, 1834-1850, (MS).

ical church (*Friedens*), located about two and one-half miles southwest of St. Charles. Informed of the defection of Heyer, Barmen sent a substitute in the person of Eduard Nollau to proceed with Niess to the Flathead Indians in Oregon. In September, Niess died, whereupon Barmen abandoned the Indian mission project. Nollau accordingly established himself among the Germans at Gravois Settlement, Missouri, twelve miles south of St. Louis. Both Nollau and Heyer helped organize the *Kirchenverein* in 1840.

Not connected with any society, and arriving in Missouri prior to those mentioned above, was Hermann Garlichs—another charter member of the *Kirchenverein*. With a group of Westphalians, Garlichs emigrated during the revolutionary upheavals of the thirties and settled on the Femme Osage Creek thirty miles west of St. Charles (1833). Here he built the first Evangelical parsonage in the West and founded the two oldest Evangelical churches in Missouri, known today as the Evangelical Church at Femme Osage and the *Friedens* Church near St. Charles.¹⁰

However, in the midst of the social, cultural and religious developments among the Germans in the West, the ecclesiastical establishment of religion had not proceeded much beyond the founding of a few small congregations usually located in the most densely populated German communities. German churches prior to 1840, and for a long time thereafter, fought shy of denominational affiliations. And yet, the time was at hand when the forces of orthodox religion needed to organize in order to sustain themselves. To meet the spiritual needs of the day, the Evangelical pastors of the West banded themselves together in the *Kirchenverein des Westens*—the first German religious church-body west of the Mississippi.

With growing interest and rising hopes the Lutheran and Reformed churches of the East viewed the religious stirrings among the Germans in the West. A union of the western Germans with already existing denominational organizations of the East seemed to be the next logical step. This, however, was not to be. The undisguised reluctance of western Germans to merge their fortunes with the German denominations in the East may be accounted for in various ways. The tension between eastern

¹⁰ *Erinnerung an den Ehrwürdigen Hermann Garlichs* (edited by ministers of the First Conference of the Lutheran Ministerium of New York, N. Y., 1865). Bek, "Followers of Duden," *M. H. R.* XVIII (1923), 36.

and western churches was rooted in fundamental differences. The peculiar problems agitating the West no longer concerned the East. Both Reformed and Lutheran synods of the East had made notable concessions on the language question. The synodical minutes of both bodies had long since been printed in the English language, which is strongly indicative of the rise of an American-born clergy. In the West, on the other hand, a fresh German immigration emphasized anew certain racial characteristics which widened the chasm between German and English speaking churches.

Even if the pastors were willing to cooperate with existing organizations in the East, their church constituency, on the whole, was opposed to an organic relation with American-German "synods" and was content to work out its problems in the sectional smugness of the West. A large number of the western Germans had come from the unionistic provinces of Prussia, Bavaria, Kur-Hesse, Baden, and Nassau. Indeed, most of the western settlers had been members of the Evangelical church in Germany and were, therefore, not attracted by the overtures of the Lutherans and the Reformed of the East.

The liberal American-Germans of the East were forced to admit, sometimes grudgingly, the expediency of permitting the newcomers to organize Evangelical congregations. Such a policy was espoused by F. A. Rauch, principal of the "Classical School" at York, Pennsylvania (Reformed), who objected to sending both Lutheran and Reformed preachers into the new territory to perpetuate the old-world division when Evangelical ministers were able to supply all needs.¹¹ It was also quite obvious that the Evangelicals were too numerous to be absorbed by a Lutheranism which was divided against itself. Although Samuel S. Schmucker suggested that the German churches of the West should organize as independent Evangelical churches "on the principles of our Congregational brethren of New England," he also espoused the idea that the pastors of such churches might consociate with their brethren of the Lutheran or Reformed denominations.¹²

Although both the Lutheran and Reformed churches of the East joined hands with the American Home Missionary Society in aiding the Germans in the West, it soon became apparent that

11 Rauch contributed a series of eight articles on "German Characteristics" to the *Home Missionary*, VIII (1835), 135 to IX (1836).

12 *Home Missionary*, IX (1836), 36; VIII (1836), 209.

the solution for the western problem could not be found in this way. Since the European-Germans of the West were being served increasingly by non-confessional pastors from Basel and Barmen, closer relations with eastern bodies became less attractive. The physical isolation of the frontier also drew the German pastors together and suggested the need of founding a fraternal organization. It also became increasingly evident that the German Evangelical forces in the West must unite against the rising tide of rationalism—an opposition which at times bordered on physical violence. Also bearing directly on the founding of the *Kirchenverein* were the Saxon Lutherans who, since their arrival in 1839, had developed an antagonistic attitude toward the unionistic groups in St. Louis and vicinity. Wall of St. Louis was the first of the Evangelical pastors to be confronted by what he referred to as the “papal Protestant Stephanists who consider it a sin to serve a united church since according to their opinion the Reformed are the children of Satan”

With all these factors operating together, the time arrived to consolidate the efforts of the Evangelical pastors scattered throughout the regions of Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana. And thus, utterly independent of any ecclesiastical connections in Europe or in America, the *Kirchenverein des Westens* came into existence—the indigenous product of the socio-religious conditions prevailing in the West.

Under date of September 28, 1840, Nollau, of Gravois Settlement, Missouri, dispatched the following letter to a selected number of German ministers in the West.

Dear Colleague:

For some time a number of German Evangelical brethren who are in charge of United Evangelical congregations, have felt in their solitude and isolation the need of fellowship and fraternal cooperation. This feeling has become stronger of late on account of opposition of the English Lutheran Synods, and for those living in the neighborhood of St. Louis of the Ultra-Lutherans.

In order to establish and foster such fellowship, we purpose, if God wills, to hold a fraternal gathering on Wednesday, October 14, 1840, in Gravois Settlement. It is not intended at this time that this meeting shall be a gathering of a “synod,” but for the time being it shall merely afford an opportunity to become mutually acquainted. Some important matters will be deliberated upon, and a covenant of fraternal fellowship will be made.

The venerable Reverend Mr. Wall of St. Louis joins me in the cordial and fraternal wish that you honor us on that day with your pres-

ence. Should this, however, be impossible, we request you to send us in writing, on or before the said date, your proposals and wishes concerning a closer alliance of the Evangelical clergy.

How many invitations were extended is not known. Five pastors responded—Garlichs of Femme Osage, Heyer of St. Charles, Wall of St. Louis, Riess of Centerville, and Karl Daubert of Quincy, Illinois.¹³ All were of Evangelical background except Daubert who, in 1839, had been sent to the West by the Ohio Synod of the Reformed Church.

The deliberations began on the morning of October 15, in the hall which separated the two rooms of the log-cabin parsonage at Gravois. The protocol of the meeting begins with this statement:

Recognizing the importance of their calling and fully aware of the responsibility resting upon them, cognizant of their weakness and unworthiness but trusting in the power and assistance of the Lord, they first knelt before Him with the prayer that for His name's sake he would guide them aright in their deliberations and fill them with wisdom and abundant grace and blessing.

Daubert was elected president and Nollau secretary. The twenty-four resolutions adopted covered a wide range of subjects. It was unanimously decided not to organize a synod at this time. The heavily charged anti-synodical atmosphere prevented such a step. It was decided, however, after a lengthy discussion, that those present constitute themselves *Der Deutsche Evangelische Kirchenverein des Westens*—a studied effort being made to avoid the bureaucratic features traditionally associated with synodical bodies. Thus the denomination later known as the Evangelical Synod came into existence as a pastoral conference consisting of eight members.

The confessional statement consisted of only sixteen words. Any uncertainty as to the meaning of the term "Evangelical" was removed by the simple subscription to the symbolic writings of "our Evangelical mother church in Germany"¹⁴ To meet the needs of religious education, the problem of procuring

13 J. Gerber, presumably located at Madison, Indiana, at the time, begged to be excused "on account of business." J. Rieger at the time of the meeting was returning from Germany with his bride. Desiring to be charter members of the society, both later affixed their signatures to the protocol of 1840.

14 In the following year (1841) subscription to the symbolic books was made secondary to the acknowledgement of the Old and New Testaments as the sole criterion of faith, in the exposition of which the consensus of the symbolic books of the Lutheran and the Reformed churches was considered normative. In 1848 the symbolic books are specifically mentioned as being "mainly" the Augsburg Confession, and the Lutheran and the Heidelberg Catechisms.

a catechism was also considered and a committee composed of Wall, Garlichs, and Nollau was requested to prepare a draft. Although the use of vestments in public services was not made obligatory, the members of the society, in the performance of their official duties, were encouraged to appear in the vestments used in the "Evangelical mother-church." It was agreed that the unique conditions prevailing in the West required radical changes in forms of worship. A committee, consisting of Daubert, Riess, and Nollau was therefore appointed to present a prospectus of a Book of Worship at the next meeting of the society.

This mixture of formal, constitutional clauses with routine business provisions constituted a basic declaration of principles which guided the subsequent development. The so-called "fundamental articles," which pertained to the creedal position, having been accepted and declared unchangeable except by a two-thirds majority vote, the secretary was instructed to present a copy of the proceedings to other ministers who might be interested and might thereby be induced to join. Nollau was instructed to invite a number of such ministers to attend the next meeting which was to be held at St. Charles, Missouri, the following year.

Thus, in the untrammelled freedom of the far West, on the unrestricted expanse of the western frontier, where new interpretations of American freedom were constantly arising, there emerged an entirely new and independent German church—a unique sociological development in the history of American religious life. No sooner, however, did it raise its feeble voice than a wave of opposition threatened to crush its life.

The founding of the *Kirchenverein* created a veritable sensation in the ranks of the rationalists. The principles for which they had fought in Germany, and in the quest of which they had come to America, seemed to be threatened anew. They had successfully repelled the threatened invasion of the Pennsylvania synods only to find that on their own soil a similar organization was beginning to raise its head. And yet, in spite of all the opposition and antagonism directed against the infant organization, it successfully withstood the storms which hovered about it.

A profound conviction dominated the European-Germans of the West that the future belonged to them and must be fashioned according to the specific needs arising in their midst, apart

from any relations with existing ecclesiastical bodies in the East. Indeed, it had become sufficiently clear that Americanized Lutheranism of the East, with its elaborate synodical organization, would not appeal to the freedom-seeking Germans newly arrived from the fatherland—most of whom seemed to favor the Evangelical position. Furthermore, as the West was in the throes of frontier problems which the East had long since overcome, it became increasingly clear that the ultimate success of any western body depended on its ability to meet the needs peculiar to the West. Indeed, in conjunction with the Saxon Lutherans, representing another wave of European-Germans, the *Kirchenverein* for years to come was destined to hold the field in Missouri against the encroachments of the German church bodies of the East.

In the process of such an adjustment both the *Kirchenverein* and the Saxon Lutherans were exposed to the danger of sectional sectarianism. This was less of a danger for the *Kirchenverein* which, in principle and practice, was committed to fraternal and irenic relations with other Protestant bodies. Thus it grew stronger in numbers and in 1866 adopted the name German Evangelical Synod of the West. In 1877, no longer restricted to the West, the name was changed to German Evangelical Synod of North America, and in 1925 the final step in the Americanization process occurred when the word "German" was dropped and the Evangelical Synod of North America appeared upon the scene. Finally in 1934 occurred the union of the Evangelical Synod and the Reformed Church in the United States from which arose a new denomination—the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

